

STATINTL

This paper was prepared by Mr. [REDACTED] as the result of discussion going on at that time. It was shown to Col. Grogan who had thought of showing it to Gen. Cabell; however, he decided against it and said just to hold it.

EL

"NEED-TO-KNOW" AND SECURITY

Restriction of classified information within a security group is ^{USUALLY} justified on the ground that such information, once communicated, even to one person, is beyond control, and that therefore, communication must be limited. The conclusion is fallacious. The correct deduction to be made from the premise is that the possessor of secret information must never impart it to anyone. Manifestly, a secret told to ten trustworthy persons is safe; whereas the same secret told to one untrustworthy person is unsafe. Assuming that anyone at all is to be given knowledge of a secret, the basis for imparting it is trust, not arbitrary limitation of the number told.

To restrict information on the basis of those who need it is to adopt one of two contradictory assumptions. Either it is assumed that all within a group are equally trustworthy but that none shall have secret information except those needing it; or that none within the group is trustworthy but that a gamble will be taken in the case of those needing the information. Actually, if the first is true, there is no need of restricting knowledge; while if the second is true, there can be no security. If a middle ground is taken---that some within the group can be trusted while others cannot---then selection of qualified risks on the basis of a need to know would hardly be intelligent.

Presumably, the method of restricting information on grounds of needed and unneeded knowledge is adopted in security groups because it is thought that the substantive judgment required for a decision as to what persons need information is more commonly possessed than

judgment as to what persons can be trusted with information. This may be a sound principle, but its adoption still may leave an unsound situation, for three principal reasons.

First, and least important, is the effect on morale. Persons entering a security group, after rigid investigation and indoctrination, have reason to believe themselves worthy of trust. When they find themselves faced with a series of barriers to what they may be told, they must assume either that the group has mental reservations about them ^{reasonably} or that the group itself does not take its own safeguards seriously. Neither conclusion is likely to make them happy. There is also a security risk involved here because normally the erection of barriers to knowledge only arouses curiosity. Furthermore, it is always possible that any member of the group, in time, will conclude that what little he personally knows must not really be worth guarding with any great care.

Second is the possible use of compartmentalization for personal or institutional reasons. Under the system, someone must make the decision as to who can be made privy to given information and who must be left in ignorance of it. Theoretically, such decisions are made exclusively on judicious, impersonal grounds. Yet the opportunity for personal protection and institutional protection in various forms is always present. A human being whose underlying reasons are personal or institutional can easily make himself believe that his reasons are absolute and universal. The identification of personal or institutional security with national security is not uncommon.

The third and most important reason is primarily an outcome of the

second. In what might be termed normal times, information can be unnecessarily compartmented without vital harm to a security group or groups, or to the nation. In case of emergency, however---as was amply demonstrated by the last war---the harm arising from unnecessary compartmentalization may be incalculable. It is during normal times that the habit of compartmentalization grows and may become fastened upon security groups. When the emergency arises, it may be too late to break the habit. The present National ^{SECURITY} ~~Defense~~ Act contains clauses whose purpose is to prevent compartmentalization that may end in disaster. All of them could be frustrated by continued insistence on the principle of "need-to-know."